

Listening to each other

Parent teamwork skills – making parenting easier

By Parenting Research Centre

- Listening is essential when discussing issues or working together to resolve conflict.
- It's important to remind yourself to pay attention and understand what others say.
- Knowing what your partner thinks, and why, can make a real difference to how well you both cope with the changes that parenting brings to your relationship.

Listening: why it's important

Listening can lead to a better understanding between the two of you and stronger **long-term relationships**. It makes it easier for parents to solve problems together, and to be consistent in how you behave towards your child. All of this makes raising children easier, and benefits the whole family. Listening is also important in helping children develop the skills they need for life. Children learn from our every interaction, including the way we [communicate](#). Good listening starts with simple steps like:

- looking for ways to really pay attention when your partner speaks
- encouraging your partner to talk
- showing that you understand your partner's perspective – even when you don't agree with it – and waiting until your partner finishes speaking before giving your own opinion.

Getting help

- Find out how you and your partner can get [extra support](#) when you need it. If you are in a relationship that involves violence, [seek professional help](#) and do whatever is necessary to ensure the safety of you and your children.

A tribute to Barbara Holborow

Tireless campaigner for children's rights and former time children's court magistrate Barbara Holborow passed away in Sydney earlier this year on May 23.

At her funeral, Father Chris Riley, founder of Youth Off The Streets, said he was on his way to see her when he heard the news. "I wanted to tell her two things: that her memory would never ever be forgotten and that I loved her," he said.

"She grabbed my arm one day and told me she loved me, but I was never able to express myself like that and said thank you back.

NSW Attorney General Greg Smith said, "She was passionate and caring and instrumental in helping change the justice system to give young people a fair go ... she was a remarkable force for good."

"I loved her for her forthrightness and passion; she had so much wisdom and expertise, which she was so generous in sharing," the foundation's CEO Jane Rowe told AAP. Ms Holborow's friend Carol Harkins said she had "the heart and clarity to see what is wrong with the world and articulate that, and the courage and determination to make the vision a reality. She had all these things wrapped in one."

"When Barb spoke you could hear a pin drop - they hung on to every word that lady said."

Ms Holborow came to the field late - she was almost 40 when she graduated as a lawyer, having studied as a single mother while working.

She fostered numerous children including Jacob, an Aboriginal boy she met at a refuge and later adopted. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community and was named this year's NSW Senior Australian of the Year.

She is survived by her daughter Louise, her adopted son Jacob, two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.



Indulge in good communication

Sayings of Barbara Holborow

'Don't just talk to your child, don't just listen; you must hear what your child is saying.'

'Every family watches too much TV'.

'What absurdity to think of an infant bonding with a day care worker instead of its mother. Be at home when children arrive after school.'

'Don't make the mistake of only finding moments of quality time for your child... give your child lots of time. There is no substitute for the attention of mum and dad.'

Tips for listening

Ideas and tips	Things to do
Stop whatever you are doing so you can look at your partner and pay full attention to his words and body language.	If you're too distracted to listen, say so, and set another time to talk.
Save questions or comments for after your partner has finished.	Wait until your partner pauses, even if there's something you don't understand. Focus on not distracting your partner.
Focus on understanding your partner's point of view and feelings about the situation.	Avoid jumping in with 'yes, but' as a way of explaining your perspective – let the talker finish the point.
Ask questions that encourage your partner to talk instead of giving a yes or no answer. Avoid too many questions – this can sound like an interrogation.	Try getting your partner to describe his experiences or views by asking <u>open-ended questions</u> ; for example, 'Tell me about ... ' Use a combination of <u>positive feedback</u> and clarification to try to understand what your partner is saying.
Confirm whether you've understood what your partner means.	Restate your partner's comments in your own words. This helps to confirm whether you understand the issue and your partner's feelings.
Show that you are interested in finding out more by asking for clarification.	Try clarifying your partner's feelings about an issue; for example, 'I gather you feel frustrated with the way this has been going'. Be genuine – your partner will know when you are really interested.
Try not to assume that your partner is being hurtful , or is the one with the problem.	If your partner says or does something hurtful, look for positive or neutral intentions behind it.

Source: www.raisingchildren.net.au